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ABSTRACT

Most of the suggestions made by Judith A. Boettcher (see related document) for an ideal secondary remedial reading program are readily applicable to such programs, although some changes in emphasis may be necessary to ensure effectiveness. Among the desired emphases are the following: structure must be inherent not only in the curriculum, but also in the classroom environment. Students can be involved in planning for individualized learning from the beginning of the program. Attempts should be made to integrate the remedial reading program with the school's entire reading program. The content of a program must include skill training in a variety of areas, including oral reading, listening, study methods, and written communication. A variety of materials must be available to meet the needs of all students (as is shown by an examination of the needs of two different students and the materials used with them). Tutoring has its place as an instructional technique but must be complemented by teacher instruction. Evaluative measures should not only identify potential program candidates but should determine each student's progress and the success of the program itself. Finally, remedial reading specialists' schedules must be planned carefully to permit them to work with students and content area teachers, maintain contact with parents, and meet regularly with other reading personnel. (GW)

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PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS REMEDIAL READING PROGRAMS

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My charge today is that of responding to Ms. Boettcher's ideal remedial reading program in regard to the practical constraints of a secondary school. Her remarks have dealt primarily with the philosophy and instructional elements of a remedial reading program, while only alluding to its evaluation and position within a secondary school setting. In the next few minutes I would like to react to each of these topics, consider the utilization of a reading specialist's time, and offer additional suggestions for an ideal remedial reading program.

Before embarking upon this task, I think it is important to clarify our frames of reference. Ms. Boettcher's perspective emanates from an urban setting, while mine is that of an upper middle class, suburban community.

Having clarified that point, let's begin by studying Ms. Boettcher's philosophy. The three emphases of her philosophy (self-acceptance, structure, and involvement) would meet with little objection, for they are essential to the success of any educational endeavor.

A student's own "self-confidence...is a precious attribute and a generative force in his future achievement." (Robinson and Lamar, 1972, p. 173) . The more successful an experience is for him, the more enjoyment he gains from the reading act, the more likely he is to read independently, and the greater his courage when he tackles more difficult tasks.

As Ms. Boettcher indicates, structure in the instructional program is vital to its success. However, that structure does not have to be provided by the use of any one published program. A

more functional structure can be provided by a core curriculum of predetermined, sequential skills; an accompanying retinue of materials and activities on various levels to teach and reinforce those skills; and evaluative measures to determine students' achievement. This provides a source from which the teacher or tutor can choose appropriate materials for use with a specific child.

Equally as important, but not considered by Ms. Boettcher, is the provision of structure within the classroom environment. It establishes a framework which affords security to students who have difficulty organizing themselves and controlling their environments. To provide that structure rules must be set, consequences evolved, procedures consistently followed, and directions for activities clearly explained.

During the individualized portion of our program we utilize a lesson plan form for each student (Ivarie, 1977) which offers structure to his day. In this situation, structure does not preclude choice for the students have input into the planning of these assignments and may accomplish them in any order.

As learning is an active, not a passive process; involvement on the part of the students is crucial. Student involvement can be achieved in a variety of ways: providing the opportunity to create the rules for the classroom, offering choices in materials and activities, soliciting suggestions of paperback books, magazines, or newspapers to purchase for the center, sharing books they've enjoyed with others, evaluating their own performance, and participating in any of the tutoring programs suggested by Ms. Boettcher.

In our program we attempt to involve each student from the beginning. After the initial diagnostic tests are administered to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each student, the results are shared with him, his parents, his content area teachers, and his guidance counselor. When reviewed with the student, this information and his own impressions of his needs are utilized to establish general objectives for his program.

During the individualized portion of the program, the format mentioned previously is employed. (Ivarie, 1977) Once a week, during the student's free reading period, the reading specialist meets with him to discuss the previous week's assignments, the materials used, the achievement of the goals projected for the week, and the formulation of goals for the following week. We have found that through this process the student gains a better understanding of his strengths and weaknesses, becomes more involved in his program, and more successfully moves to self-sufficiency.

Before considering the organization and instructional elements of a remedial reading program it is important to realize what constitutes such a program and how it relates to the academic life of the entire school. A secondary remedial reading program is one that services students, the school, and the community. Its thrust is directed toward students who are reading two or more years below grade level, their content area and elective teachers, and their parents. In general, its goals are those of aiding students in attaining their maximum potential in reading, instilling in them the enjoyment and purposes of reading, training them to transfer their learning to other life contexts, and

assisting teachers and parents in understanding these students' needs and promoting their optimum growth.

In a typical secondary public school the scheduling process places a remedial reading student in the reading center or lab from a study hall one to five periods per week. No grouping of students by reading level or instructional need is taken into consideration. In some cases students come at different times during the week, so that interaction as a group or in a peer tutoring situation is held to a standstill until the following week.

In regard to the remedial reading program's relationship to the total school environment, Ms. Boettcher states that it not only constitutes an essential component of a school reading program, but also must function as a complement to the entire school reading program. The first portion of her assertion is undoubtedly true. Yet, for most public secondary schools, "the remedial and developmental components generally operate as isolated segments in the curriculum." (Peters, 1977, p. 514)

The causes of this lack of integration are myriad. The size of the school, the case load (both students and teachers) of the reading specialist, the position of the administration, the disinterest of content area teachers in integrating reading instruction into their curriculum, and the lack of time within the structure to allow teachers to come together as a planning team are all factors hindering cooperative efforts.

However, Ms. Boettcher's thesis is significant. For a program to be successful students must realize that the information gained in reading carries over to other parts of their

school life. As Robinson states, "Possibly the most significant factor working against the success of many typical remedial reading programs...is that students cannot recognize immediate and positive applicability to their lives in or out of school." (Robinson, 1969, p. 176)

How can this transfer be accomplished without the remedial reading and the content area programs functioning as counterparts? To initiate more communication, and possibly more integration, between the reading specialist and the content area teachers any of the following methods might prove to be successful:

1. open up the reading center or lab for visits by faculty,
2. observe your students' performance in content area classrooms,
3. send out information on new additions to the professional library,
4. stuff copies of pertinent chapters from professional books or magazines in teachers' mailboxes,
5. offer to do a demonstration lesson and plan it with the teacher,
6. team plan or team teach a lesson or unit with a content area teacher,
7. request suggestions for in-service workshops, and
8. present in-service workshops on topics proposed.

Having discussed what constitutes a remedial reading program and its relationship to the entire school's reading program, let's proceed to the consideration of the instructional elements: the areas of instruction, the materials, and the teaching methods.

Ms. Boettcher declares that the "content of an ideal remedial reading program consists of a well-balanced curriculum of vocabulary, comprehension, and free-reading materials." Not denying the importance of these three components, it is a view that needs to be expanded. An ideal curriculum should encompass the following skills: oral reading, word analysis (the study of affixes, roots, and their meanings and, for some individuals, the study of specific phonetic elements), vocabulary (the enlargement of sight word and oral vocabularies, the study of multiple meaning words, and the use of affixes, roots, and context clues to define unknown words), listening, study skills (the processes of outlining, notetaking, skimming, summarizing, and the study method, SQ3R), the differentiation of reading speeds, and written communication skills as they relate to reading tasks. Not every student will need to or should work in all of these areas, but the lack of competence in any of these skills may be present.

Remedial reading students in a public secondary school come in all stages, packages, and sizes. Their needs, levels, and interests are far from similar. Dechant aptly outlines four categories of remedial readers: the slow learner, the reluctant reader, the disadvantaged reader, and the retarded reader. (Dechant, 1973) If we add to those categories the considerations of dissimilar socioeconomic backgrounds, expectations, interests, and emotional make-ups, these students' needs become even more divergent.

A remedial reading program bearing the standard of aiding students in achieving their maximum potential in reading and recognizing the applicability of this training to their lives

in and out of school must have a variety of materials available to meet the levels of competence, the instructional needs, and interests of each student. (Shepherd, 1973; Bond and Tinker, 1967; Dechant, 1973)

To clarify this point, let's inspect the levels, needs, and interests of two remedial reading students from our reading center.

Example: DAVID

Grade level:	8
Reading level:	5.7
Ability:	average
Background:	upper class, white collar suburban with expectations for college
Instructional needs:	comprehension, literal and inferential vocabulary reading rate study skills
Materials:	Tactics in Reading, A (Scott, Foresman and Co., 1972) Reading for Concepts, G (McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970) Getting the Facts, F (Barnell-Loft, Ltd., 1967) Top Picks Series (Reader's Digest Educational Division, 1977) Controlled Reader Study Guide and filmsticks for Book FF (Educational Developmental Laboratories, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1968) Timed Readings, Book 1 (Jamestown Publishers, Inc., 1975) Unit on SQ3R Unit on outlining and notetaking
Interests:	adventure, science fiction, hockey.
Free reading:	Ice Hockey, Deathwatch, Fantastic Voyage

Example: JOEY

Grade level:	7
Reading level:	3.1
Ability:	low average
Background:	working class, inner-city

	with expectations for being a truck driver
Instructional needs:	word analysis vocabulary comprehension
Materials:	New Phonics We Use, E (Rand McNally and Co., 1972) West Word Bound Book (The Economy Co., 1976) Decode: A Foundation for the Point 31 Program (Reader's Digest Services, Inc., 1975) Breakthrough Series (Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972) Point 31, Level 2 (Reader's Digest Services, Inc., 1975) Something True, Something Else (Globe Book Co., 1975)
Interests:	ice skating
Free reading:	Action books (Scholastic, 1972), Scope

Skimming through the information presented it is easy to ascertain that the instructional needs and levels of David and Joey are very different. The materials and activities chosen for use with David would be inappropriate for Joey. David needs concentrated study in the areas of comprehension, vocabulary, reading rate, and study skills; while Joey needs to further develop his word attack skills, increase his sight word vocabulary, expand his oral vocabulary, conquer basic comprehension skills, and acquire practical life skills.

No published program will be satisfactory for all students. In fact, most published materials for remedial students do not provide the repetition of skills work necessary to achieve mastery. To obtain the reinforcement vital for mastery it is necessary to utilize a diversity of published materials in reading and other content areas as well as teacher made activities and materials.

In her discussion of teaching methods Ms. Boettcher concentrates on various tutoring situations, but fails to mention the responsibility of the teacher. No one can deny the fact that

academic engaged time is increased through tutoring programs or the supporting conclusion that there is a correlation between student attention and student gain. The utilization of tutoring programs can and does benefit students, such as David and Joey. However, tutoring tends to diminish the direct responsibility and contact of the teacher with each individual student and eliminates any opportunity for group discussion (Davis, 1975), cohesiveness, or direct instruction. As a teaching method, it should be a supplement to teacher directed individual work, small group work, or total class work.

Ms. Boettcher's instructional week plans are similar in focus and possible for implementation or adaptation in a secondary school. They all accomodate free reading, diversity in student tasks, and a variety of teaching methods. The only difficulties that might arise in fulfilling any of them would be caused by scheduling conflicts or by maintaining the time guidelines.

Two questions arose upon studying the plans. What provisions are made for students, if they finish their work early? How easily do they switch from reading newspapers and magazines to books? Our experience in terms of the latter was that the students complained they had just become involved in the story when the twenty minute period ended. With their suggestion we decided to provide one forty-five minute period of free reading per week.

Now that we have reflected upon the definition of a remedial reading program, its relationship to the rest of the school's curriculum, and its instructional elements, the next topic for contemplation is evaluation. Although Ms. Boettcher alludes to

the importance of evaluation, she fails to elaborate the concept beyond "the need for consistent entrance and exit policies."

Evaluation involves three components: determination of criteria for entrance and exit from the reading program, measurement of the students' growth, and evaluation of the goals and progress of the program itself. Instituting the entrance and exit standards should be a shared effort of the reading specialist, the department chairman, and the content area teachers, so that discriminating referrals can be made. Determination of the number of students, the degree of retardation in reading scores, the weight of information from other sources, the inclusion of slow learners, and the consideration of motivation are some of the factors that should be deliberated in preparing standards for entrance. Evaluation of standardized tests or informal reading inventories, grades in content area subjects, and information from the content area teachers and the reading specialist might be entertained as possible exit criteria.

Once guidelines are established for entrance requirements, referrals should be solicited from content area teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors, and special services personnel. Any standardized test results, grades, and comments from each student's teachers should be accumulated. At this point the reading specialist, the department chairman, and a content area teacher should study the referrals, choose the students for the program, and notify the students, parents, and content area teachers. Additions and deletions can be made throughout the year at the discretion of the reading specialist, the content area teachers, the student, and his parents.

The second facet of evaluation, the measuring of each student's growth, needs to occur on a daily, quarterly, and yearly basis. Methods of accomplishing this task are performance on daily assignments, pre-tests and post-tests for particular concepts, utilization of graphs, charts, or word banks, informal reading inventories, or standardized tests.

A dilemma that must be confronted in a public secondary school is the manner in which the students will be marked on their report cards. Initially, we tried a pass-fail system with accompanying anecdotal reports four times per year. When the students protested to not receiving letter grades, we switched to a letter grade scale with anecdotal evaluation forms and opportunities for parent conferences provided at least twice a year. Under the letter grade system, the student's effort accounts for forty percent of his grade, so that it is difficult for anyone to fail.

In each of the above situations, the student confers with the teacher to review his performance on exercises or tests or to become acquainted with the information on the evaluation forms before they are dispatched home.

The third aspect of evaluation is the measurement of the effectiveness of the reading program. As Wood surmises, "In reading programs there seem to be few tangible guidelines for judging the value received for the dollar granted." (1976, p. 618) He proposes a method involving the following steps: talking with teachers who spend the money and run the program, visiting the classroom and looking around, looking and listening to the students, talking to the parents, and talking to the counselors

and other teachers. (Wood, 1976)

As a counterpart to that proposal it would seem that a study of the participants' grades in their content area subjects and their performance on yearly achievement or reading testing should be undertaken.

Having collected all of this information plus students' opinions as to the effectiveness of the course, changes should evolve. Flexibility must be inherent in the program for it to grow and become a more effective tool within the school.

Although Ms. Boettcher does not deal with the use of the reading specialist's time, it is reflective of the success of the program. The specialist at the secondary level is required to be a jack of all trades: a diagnostician, a consultant, a teacher, an administrator, and a coordinator of volunteers or tutors. The work schedule of a remedial reading teacher should include a time provision, perhaps as great as the equivalent of one day per week for basic functions. Among these are staff meetings, maintenance of records, planning for instruction and assembling materials, and maintaining a liasion with the classroom teachers of her pupils or with other faculty. (Spache, 1976)

In attaining that goal, a two or three hour block of time is preferable to one period per day. This affords enough time to complete a diagnostic work-up on a student, initiate a unit of work with a group of content area teachers, start planning for an in-service workshop, meet with a group of content area teachers concerning the performance of a shared student, or confer with the parents of a student.

As well as being responsible to the students and the content

area teachers, the reading specialist has an obligation to maintain contact with the parents of his or her students. Above and beyond telephone calls, grades, anecdotal records, and opportunities for conferences, we also discovered that offering an evening discussion group for parents of children with reading difficulties was another means of providing more interchange. Information was presented on different skills areas, the psychological problems that might be encountered by remedial reading students, activities they could utilize at home, and appropriate books and magazines for various levels and interests.

Equally as important as the opportunity to interact with content area teachers and parents is the support, continuity, creativity, and stimulation afforded by meeting with other reading personnel in the system at least once a week. During this time the following activities might be performed: setting town-wide reading goals on a yearly basis, planning in-service workshops, coordinating efforts in remedial and developmental courses in grades K-12, sharing information on teaching methodology, activities, or materials, or visiting reading centers in other systems.

In conclusion most of Ms. Boettcher's suggestions are readily applicable to a secondary remedial reading program. Our differences appear to be in terms of definition or emphasis. Structure must be inherent not only in the curriculum, but also in the classroom environment. Each student's individual levels, instructional needs, and interests should become the basis for his or her instructional program. To meet those needs the content of a program must extend beyond the areas of vocabulary, comprehension, and free reading to include oral reading, word analysis, listening, study skills, differentiation of reading speeds, and written

communication skills. Tutoring, as an instructional technique, has its place, but it must be complemented by teacher directed instruction on an individual, small group, or total class basis. Evaluative measures should not only identify potential candidates, but also determine each student's progress and the success of the program itself.

In carefully planning the utilization of the remedial reading specialist's time some of the constraints can be overcome. Time can be devoted to meeting the needs of individual students and content area teachers, to coordinating tutors or volunteers, and to keeping administrators and parents informed and involved.

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